

Wednesday, April 16, 2003

Duxbury Clipper

Selectmen Vote No on Dry Cask Storage

By a vote of 2 to 1, selectmen have voted not to support a non-binding resolution seeking to have Entergy institute secure dry cask storage at Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant in Plymouth. Petitioner Mary Lampert was in Spain this week, but fellow nuclear advisory committee member Becky Chin presented the resolution to selectmen.

The resolution, which is being brought as an article at the upcoming Special Town Meeting, was originally brought to Annual Town Meeting. Residents who are Entergy employees amended the original resolution from the floor of town meeting, and their amendment, which resolved to move the spent nuclear fuel rods to Yucca Mountain, the national repository, when it becomes available was approved by voters.

The same Entergy employees attended this week's selectmen's meeting and informed selectmen that the type of dry cask storage the revived resolution calls for is untested in the industry.

"The petitioners' technology does not exist. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has acknowledged they haven't even begun to study this type of storage, which is separate, dispersed and in a bunker design," Mike Bellamy, St. George Street, said.

Selectmen Andre Martecchini said he saw no conflict supporting the Yucca Mountain resolution from Annual Town Meeting, as well as the current citizen's

petition seeking secure dry cask storage.

"Yes, we should push for Yucca Mountain, but that is not going to happen for a long time. I don't see the contradiction. This is a non-binding resolution saying 'we are concerned'. If it means looking at new technology, so be it," Martecchini said.

John Tuffy did not agree.

"We asked Entergy to come here and they did, and told us [the secure dry cask storage the resolution call for] is not feasible. We are asking them to spend a great deal of money, and asking them to handle dangerous materials twice. If we did this we would own the fuel rods for the lifespan of dry cask storage," Tuffy said.

"I don't necessarily want to vote against it, but do I want to vote for it? Not at all. This is a temporary solution, not a permanent one," he said.

Chairman Betsy Sullivan had originally agreed with Martecchini, but changed her position after Tuffy's comments.

The original license for Pilgrim allowed for 880 rods in the cooling pool. There are currently 2,278 rods in the pool. The NRC license now allows Entergy to have up to 3659 rods in the pool, Bellamy said.

"When the Department of Energy defaulted on removing the spent fuel, the licensees expanded the pools," Bellamy said.

Entergy's current license to run Pilgrim expires in 2012.